all verandahs, trees, window-sills and gateways, the facade of the hall bearing a giant lantern in the shape of the Buddha. In the town the gayest display was put on by the trader residents of Gold Mountain and Goods Bazaar Rows. These people who cared not for races, garden tea parties nor fashionable weddings, put all their zest into the Tasaungdaing celebration. Each entrance to the streets was spanned with arch and pavilion, and between the two ends were contained lights, feeding at each house, a stage show, arrays of presents which were being offered to monasteries, and a jostling mass of people from all parts of the town. Among all the glitter moved the daughters of the houses, also on display; their breasts sparkling with the full stock of jewellery, the diamond spangles in their hair trembling in scintillation like the quivering balls of silver and tinsel on the decorations around them. 796

All this tinsel and glitter, sparkle and glistening tintillation reached its crowning point, only to be shown as vanity, fantasy, in the spectacle put forth at the cremation of a revered hpongyi—one whose life on the earth was all austerity and solidness of the worth of gold. A monk dies and is embalmed in honey and put to lie in state for perhaps a year, while the *lu*, ordinary humans, prepare for the cremation that is to send him off on his return flight to higher states of existence. He whose life has been lived in accordance with the belief that all earthly things, all ornament and pleasures of the earth, are illusion, impermanence and struggle, now has his exit prepared for by weaker mortals who build and decorate a seven-tiered pavilion for his pyre; and fantastic mammoth creatures to flank it high in the sky—giant birds, tigers and elephants, high on the slopes of Shwe Dagon Hill, tall and gigantic, but empty within, of inflammable bamboo and paper, caparisoned with gaudy, floating trimmings. Under the vast shadows of these empty creatures gay pavilions for feeding and the sale of bright wares are put up, lights are festooned for a night bazaar. When the day dawns for the burning, crowds throng to the fair, in merriment because the monk who so long ago renounced his attachment to human affections leaves no grieving widow and children; the coffin is lifted into its tiered catafalque and laid on a bed of inflammable tinder; it is drawn to the centre of the giant animals. When the feasting, buying and jostling have had their run, word passes round that the final moment is about to take place; people are drawn towards the canopy; the masters of ceremony throw rockets and torches into the decked bier; four, five and suddenly a hundred tongues of fire lick the bamboo, paper and the bed of tinder, and a magnificent blaze rises into the sky. Soon other torches set aflame the row of animals, and elephants, tigers, boats and birds go up in smoke, together with canopy, bier and coffin, leaving no traces of the saintly body. Excitement abates, the 766 793

766 crowds leave the fair, the sellers their stalls, and of the caparisoned field
793 only a charred blackness remains.

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722 So soon the fires of war were to burn up not only the show and tinsel of Burma, but things more solid and golden than the life of a monk —rice fields and food of all kinds, *ain-daung-pyit-si*, the setting-up-house-goods of a million husbanding families, the houses, villages and towns whose peace allowed men and women to weave, cure fish, make boats, carve silver and wood and ivory, and indulge their laughing children. December 8th fell soon after the full moon of Tasaungmon, when the Lent-free season was but short-lived, and laid a blight upon the whole country. Destruction was so swift, so sudden.

For nations which declare war or have war declared on them, the day of outbreak ushers in a grim period, but it is clear in the minds of the people that this is a call to effort and sacrifice, for the idea of nation, sovereignty, liberty, whatever they have learnt to hold dear for long generations, or else have just newly won to cherish as something precious. They know, when war is declared, that they must defend their country, have ready for sacrifice their young men, and work with grim industry in a geared-up machine. But how could this apply in the case of Burma, a country which had lost proud sovereignty fifty-five years before, which had not yet gained a modern replacement for it, and which felt itself to be only incidentally in the path of the war monster's appetite. Even those of the people who had been expecting war with the rumours that flew around Rangoon for the six months previous to this, either from people who had cause to know or from a clear judgment, did not know quite how to feel when it came upon them. In our family councils as to which place would offer the best sanctuary from bombs, gunfire and the recklessness of fighting soldiery, a young cousin opposed the idea of our ancestral Thaton as being directly in the path of the invader. "Well, what if it is," said her mother; "do we go to the middle of the roadway, and stand, looking up with mouth open to receive the cannon balls? We are human beings, eating rice. We can reason like human beings and move aside, avoid a little, and the menace will go straight down the road, and after a time leave us safe behind."

This might be regarded as typical enough of the attitude of the majority of people—to move aside from big places and the scenes of war, to leave posts when to hold on to them would be snapping with jaws agape at the gunfire of a fast-winning invader. But the results of this policy was enough to fill us with wretchedness. People ran here and there, from one set of relatives to another, not always welcoming; setting out with foolish encumbrances of goods and chattels and gradually being

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

564 767 coffin or digging the grave. This occupation has therefore fallen almost exclusively into the hands of the old para-kyun, and helps to keep alive the ancient feeling. It must be allowed that the ways of the sandalās do not in any way tend to conciliate the multitude.

564 681 625 Finally there were the pagwet, the letyataung, or thaing-gyaing, the constables, jailers, executioners, lictors, mostly confined to the neighbourhood of the native kingdom Mandalay. These merited all the obloquy that could be cast on them, but their position of quasi-authority made them more secretly hated than openly flouted. They were never allowed to enter a free man's house, even in the exercise of their office; nor could they go within the walls of the palace stockade, but many a citizen smarted under the blows of the lictor's thaing, when a great man came round a corner suddenly, and the letyataung saw a chance for a back-hander with his fasces; and it was far too easy a matter for a man to get into jail in Mandalay to make it a wise proceeding to rail at the pagwet. It was an unlovely custom in Upper Burma which made the executioner both constable and jailer, and condemned him to live on his wits. The natural result was that he lived on the prisoners, and extorted the last pice out of his victim with threats of violence, or actual torture. Pagwet means a circle on the cheek, and this ring on the face implied that its bearer had been condemned for a capital crime, and was respited to become executioner. Others had devices descriptive of their offence tattooed on the chest, as luthat (murderer), thukho (thief), damya (dacoit or highway robber). An execution in Mandalay was a horrid sight. The "spotted man" danced round his victim, made feints with his sword and burst into fits of wild laughter or yells, to shake the doomed man's nerves. It must be admitted that the spectators were very little better. A skilful blow which just slit the skin and drew blood met with an approving shout. The pagwet, like other outcasts, was buried like carrion when he died, or perhaps was simply thrown out with the town offal.

●[766]

563 775 How does all this agree with the theory of Buddhism, that there is equality for all, and that the poorest man can raise himself to sublimest heights after death? The king

23: Brant & Mi Mi Khaing E, I-5 (1949-1950)1951
APl Burma
Burmese AP4

787 826 Omens are read from the position of mongoloid spots on the newborn baby's body. They are said to represent marks put on in a previous existence and their presence proves the child was then a human being. A blue spot on the foot presages a life of travel. Any marks leading from the right shoulder to the left hip, the line that the royal riband takes, indicate a royal future; today, however, with no royalty in Burmese society, such marks merely forecast a "great" future for the child.

775 826 A child is constantly watched from the time of birth for signs of whose reincarnation it represents. This is a constant topic in the family conversations.

Any disfigurement in a newborn child is regarded as a carry-over of the parents' store of demerit, as well as that of the child, from previous existences. It is regarded with a sense of shame and sorrow.

845 Although multiple births are neither preferred nor desired, they are not looked upon with any marked anxiety nor are there any supernatural means employed to prevent them.

766 In the event of a stillborn baby, the corpse is given special treatment. It is kept in a case, clothed and powdered, and a tray of food is set in front of it every day. It is considered auspicious to care for a stillborn child in this manner: the spirits will guide the parents in their dreams toward the attainment of material prosperity.

751 854 [825] [753] For the normal baby who survives, a number of things are done by Burmese parents to protect it from malevolent influences. Before it is a month old, a tiger bone is ground on a stone, together with a little water, and mixed with honey. This is fed to the child to ward off a mysterious infant illness associated with the tiger. A connection is believed to exist between the tiger and convulsions; some parents place a tiger skin under the mattress of the baby's bed to guard against such illness. A knife placed under the baby's mattress is said to protect against illness in general.

To insure good health and well-being for the child, a white thread over which certain *mantras* have been recited may be given by a Buddhist monk and tied around the baby's wrists. Should a baby be admired by people for its growth, the thread may be left on to neutralize the harm that is believed to result from such expressions.

[278] When the child's umbilical cord has dried and fallen off, it is kept and used as a medicine for any illness that befalls the child. A little of it is ground up and mixed with water for such purposes.

000 A very close connection is believed to exist between mother and child during